

VZCZCXRO3034
PP RUEHCN RUEHGH
DE RUEHHK #2949 2000844
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 190844Z JUL 06
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7821
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 002949

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP AND EAP/CM
NSC FOR DENNIS WILDER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2031

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR PREL CH HK VT

SUBJECT: NO ADDITIONAL ILLICIT BISHOP ORDINATIONS PREDICTED
THIS SUMMER

Classified By: Acting E/P Chief Jeff Zaiser. Reasons: 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On July 18, Monsignor Eugene Nugent, the papal representative in Hong Kong, told poloff that he did not expect any illicit Chinese bishop ordinations in the coming weeks and predicted a quiet summer. The Pope, said Nugent, at Cardinal Joseph Zen's suggestion and urging, hoped to convene a high-level inter-ministerial meeting to assess the Holy See's China policy; more details about the meeting would likely emerge in the fall. Over the next year, Cardinal Zen -- who takes his role as the only active Chinese cardinal very seriously -- planned on meeting with various Chinese Catholic communities throughout the world. And in order to deal with a heavy workload, Nugent has asked the Holy See to post an additional person from the Vatican diplomatic corps to Hong Kong and has requested additional funding to hire more local staff. End summary.

Quiet Summer

¶2. (C) On July 18, Monsignor Eugene Nugent, the papal representative in Hong Kong, told poloff that he did not expect any additional illicit Chinese bishop ordinations in the coming weeks. The summer, predicted Nugent, would be relatively quiet. With Vatican officials on holiday in August, Nugent also planned on leaving Hong Kong for holiday and would return in early September. John Tong, the Auxiliary Bishop of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, would continue to monitor the situation of the PRC Catholic community.

¶3. (C) The Pope, said Nugent, at Cardinal Joseph Zen's suggestion and urging, was considering hosting a high-level inter-ministerial meeting to assess the Holy See's China policy. In 2000, Pope John Paul II had invited several China policy advisors and his top ministers for a similar meeting to discuss the Vatican's PRC policy. With the recent personnel changes in the Vatican, Nugent said that the final decision on this meeting would not occur until after the summer holiday period.

Zen to Travel More

¶4. (C) Cardinal Zen took his role as the only Chinese cardinal very seriously, said Nugent. (Note: Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi of the Taiwan Diocese is retired. End Note.) Over the next year, Zen intended to travel more and planned on meeting with various Chinese Catholic communities, including those located in the U.S.

Office Expansion

15. (C) As the sole Vatican official located in Hong Kong, Nugent's responsibilities include monitoring the Catholic community in Hong Kong and China and identifying new bishop candidates. It has become clear in recent years that his office has been understaffed and needed larger quarters in order to properly carry out the Vatican's policies, said Nugent. While he has been able to rely on the Holy Spirit Study Center for help with research and outreach, Nugent has asked the Holy See to post an additional person from the Vatican diplomatic corps to Hong Kong and has requested additional funding to hire more local staff. In particular, he would like to hire Hong Kong-based priests who already have a strong background in China affairs. Nugent said that he also planned to relocate his office to a space that could accommodate the additional staff. Hopefully, renovations on his new offices in Kowloon (near the old Kai Tak airport) will be finished before next summer.

Sakaue